

First Year at Haines

Pelastell

Paro
H. F.

Letter from Mrs. Willard (now at Juneau) giving a sketch of the Beginning of Mission Work among the Chilcats.

Haines, Chilcat Mission, Alaska.
My Dear Friends:--

And now where shall I begin to tell you of all you wish to know of our work? You know we expected to live in a tent till we could put up for ourselves a log house. Well, we should have done so had it not been for Dr. Sheldon Jackson's wish and unselfish zeal. Instead of waiting until some one proffered the means, he had faith in the loving interest of the Church at large to redeem the pledge he might make, and borrowed money on his own responsibility to erect buildings for the Mission both here and at Hydah. Then, as the mechanical part of building was no small problem so far from supplies, he brought his own experience to bear personally upon it, and with his carpenters worked with his own hands on our pretty home here. We also brought us a bell--the gift of Mrs. C. H. Langdon, of Elizabeth, N. J.,--which is the first Presbyterian bell in Alaska; and oh, how sweet it sounds!

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And now as to our field and work here! I would like to give you a clear idea of it. You have heard of the British Mission, under the care of Mr. Duncan, who has built up the model Christian Indian village of Met-lah-kat-lah, British Columbia. It is with something of the same plan in mind that we have located our Mission on Portage Bay, where there is no permanent Indian house, and named it after the Secretary of the Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions, "Haines". In our Chilcat country there are four villages--three on the Chilcat River and one on the Chilcoot River. Each of these villages has its chief or chiefs, and medicine man, each its distinct nobility, and each its own interests and jealousies of all the others. So, you see, had we built at any one of these places, we would in some measure come into antagonism with the others. We would, in their eyes, be allying ourselves with that particular people, and the others would be too proud to come under their hand. As it is, Portage Bay is a beautiful and safe harbor almost at the head of Chilcoot River Inlet, the eastern arm of Lynn Channel. The point of land here between the Chilcat River and the channel is the largest level tract, and the most fertile we have seen anywhere in Alaska, and will afford ample farming-ground for the people. They will regard it as our place and so speak of it and have promised in all the villages to come to "the minister's place" and build new houses where they can learn something good. They have visited us and one and all have expressed their joy at our arrival and their own intention to come and build here as soon as the winter stores of fish and berries are secured.

Besides our own house here there are buildings put up by the trading company, one occupied by them as a trading post, the other purchased by the Mission Board for school purposes. It is sixteen by thirty feet, of rough and knotty up-and-down boards, without chimneys, with four small windows, which cannot be opened and one small door, and so frail that I fear it will scarcely stand one good winter storm, for it shakes with walking down the steps.

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Historical Sketch of

Chilcat Mission, Alaska.

Special.

Please return.

1891

A familiar letter from Mrs. Warne on
conditions of property, also
Haines showing pioneer work
from early till late
Daily

Mrs. Viola Warne,

Chilkat, Alaska.

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I wish you could have come over to see our Mission here, so that you could better tell how we are situated. There is a mile square of land owned by the Mission, and it is in a delightful corner of the earth. Shut in here by these bold, but grand snow capped mountains, and the great forests all about, fronting toward the east on Portage Bay, one of the most peaceful and picturesque little sheets of water I have seen in Alaska. Truly I can say that the "Haines Mission" is "beautiful for situation." There are two large, comfortable houses, besides a number of small barns, shops, etc., here belonging to the Mission, and along the Bay, to the north, is a nice little settlement of some thirty Indians houses.

One house, built for the Home, is a large log building; the one we occupy is a frame building a few rods from the Home. There are many repairs needed here, but Mr. Warne and I have, neither of us, spent an idle moment since we came, and with such material as we found here, and by buying a little more, we have ~~it~~ now quite a good deal more comfortable than when we came, and I can assure you very much cleaner. There are seven quite large rooms, including the wood shed that will answer for a summer kitchen. The floors, all over the house, were so dirty, but I have scrubbed them several times over, and now they look very well.

(~~and~~ the wood shed has been cleaned, and the floor painted.) The wood work all over the house needs painting. Two rooms down stairs have been papered, but the paper is now much soiled and torn off so does not look very well. The rooms up stairs have not been ceiled, and cheese cloth has been put on for ceiling and paper too

They must be rather airy in winter. The one we occupy for our sleeping room Mr. Warne has been covering with tarred paper, and then ceiling with matched lumber, and it will be very much warmer. The front room to the northeast, down stairs, is Mr. Warne's study and our sitting room combined, and Mr. Warne has ceiled that overhead too. We have quite a pleasant room of that. Mr. Warne's library nearly fills one end, then he has a study table, a center table covered with books and fancy things. I have quite a number of pictures hanging on the walls, a shelf for brie-a-brac, and our two easy chairs.

In our dining-room and kitchen combined we have a home-made lounge, chairs, dining-table, kitchen work table, a sewing corner, and altogether it is rather a pleasant room.

Mr. Warne has one of the rooms down stairs for his workshop this winter, and I am so glad, for it brings him close by when he is at his work, and I like that much better than to have him off in some other building. He has been working so hard ever since we came , that I know he has been getting poor over it. Besides all that he has done to help me, he has been cutting ~~the~~ wood and bringing it all on his back, and has cut enough grass for our "Mexico," which we hope before very long to have. Mr. Warne has sent for her, but she has not come. That haying was very hard, for it is so hard to cut around stumps and among brush, and then he has brought it all from quite a long distance on his back. Dear me! how that poor man has worked at all sorts of things, and then preaches every Sunday morning, and in the afternoon has the Indians come together to sing, and he also talks to them. Now he has begun his school, and so has more than ever on his hands and mind, for he gets up at five o'clock and works hard

at the wood or something till school time, walks those two long miles over to the school house, comes back at night, chopping his way along through the woods, bringing some wood home on his shoulders, and then working hard here as long as he can see. I try to have dinner ready just as soon as he gets home at night, for I taught school for ten years and know that it is hungry work when one has but a cold lunch at noon.

We were so late that we could not do much about a garden this year, still we have a little one and are trying some things. We hope to get a good early start next Spring and have as fine a garden as anybody. Alaska will raise just as fine vegetables as can be found. We have seen gardens around here with as fine potatoes, onions, beets, turnips, cabbages, carrots, radishes and lettuce ~~as~~ as we ever saw growing. Mr. Healey has turnips growing that are now larger than my head.

Such beautiful strawberries! The vines growing up a foot, or a foot and a half, high, and just loaded with the loveliest berries. The strawberries are cultivated, but there are more than twenty varieties of wild berries here. Some of them are very fine.

We very much enjoy and life here, but, indeed, we have worked just about like slaves ever since we got here in order to make the place, which had not only been neglected all these years, but things had been carried off and destroyed, probably by the Indians, ^{so} that it did seem to be in a condition almost too bad to ever restore to anything like living in decently, but now after two months and a half of the hardest kind of work we are quite cozy and comfortable, but still we keep trying to get things ~~in~~ better running order and it seems as if there is no end. In

fact we cannot begin to get things as they should be till we get more money to do with, for we find that it takes no small sum to get things in this country, and it did cost so much to get what few things we had here. The lumber of which the house was built was very green, and it has so shrunken that there are great cracks all over the house. But few of the rooms have been ceiled but two of them had had wall paper on that has the same great cracks in, and, of course, that is a great eye sore to me. We want though, if we are spared our health and strength and life here, to get some of that nice, heavy manilla paper with which to paper the whole of the inside of the house, and that will not only cover cracks but make it real warm, then over that put some nice wall paper, and then we will be fit for anyone to come and see us. Although Mr. Warne has ceiled the overhead of our sleeping room, which is up stairs, yet the sides let through a great deal of cold and I have been getting together all the large wrapping papers of every color and description that we had, and have made a very highly colored room of it by pasting these all around the sides. Well, if it only helps to keep us ~~more~~ comfortable for this winter we will try to think it is the style to have a "crazy work" papering.

We have been blessed with excellent health, and have been very kindly treated by both natives and whites, and have such a pleasant situation here and such a happy home that I am sure we have nothing to complain of, but very much for which to be sincerely thankful.

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vine and just stays near eating young pea vines as contentedly as can be. At night Mr. Warne would get her and put her in the barn but after two or three days she did not want to go in, so he has left her out nearly all the time, just getting her in when it is a rainy night, and she is doing nicely. The dogs came every day and barking at her, but as soon as Mr. Warne would hear them he would run and shoot at them and they would go off. Mexico seems to be just the cow for them, for she never seems to mind them at all and will not run. Mr. Warne thinks they will not pitch on her so long as she does not run from them. They have been after her a good many times, but Mr. Warne would always scare them off by shooting at them and not hitting, but said he was going to kill one or two of the leaders. I did not want him to, for fear the Indians would get angry at us, but two or three days ago he accidentally shot one of the two little dogs, not killing it but making it yelp terribly, (I do not know whether it has since died or not.) and, do you know that although there were nearly a dozen dogs around then, not one has looked at the cow since. I hope it is a lesson they will bear in mind.

Mr. Warne commenced his school, and kept it open three weeks, the first having quite a school, and the next some, but the next scarcely any. I went quite a number of days for him, but the Indians went away off up the river to fish for the ~~canneries~~, so that there was scarcely an Indian man, woman or child left in the town, and when Judge Shakely was up two weeks ago he said that we need not attempt to keep the school open till the Indians should come back, so as to make some showing of a school, so for two weeks we have not had any, and not many are back yet so I hardly expect we will have any next week. It has been such a

help to Mr. Wayne, for he has to bring the wood from such a long distance and do it all himself, that it is a very hard, slow job, and in these two weeks he has just pushed on and got a nice lot, all brought and split, and nicely piled in our wood shed, and has dug ditches about the house for drains and banked up the house, and all such work.

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Perry
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